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CIA tells of link to study here

By JANETTE COREY

The Central Intelligence Agency acknowledged today that it has sponsored computerized research on brain waves at Children's Hospital and Health Center here for the last two years, but both the CIA and the hospital denied the research will lead to the development of a sophisticated lie detector test.

Dr. Donald Krebs, director of the hospital's Speech, Hearing and Neurosensory Center, said the research will be used by the CIA to determine skill levels of recognition in prospective CIA agents.

"It really has nothing to do with espionage or intrigue," Krebs said.

The \$100,000-a-year CIA contract, which began in 1975, involves experiments with volunteers whereby "visual evoked responses" are recorded electronically from brain waves and are then analyzed by computers.

Subjects respond to familiar or unfamiliar pictures flashed on a screen at 0.02 of a second. Familiar faces evoke a different brain-wave pattern than the unfamiliar faces and the waves can be measured even if the subject doesn't verbally respond.

News reports initially indicated that the research may be used to develop what could be a sophisticated lie-detector system.

But CIA spokesman Dennis Berend said today in Washington that the contract "is not a lie detector thing at all."

"It's so that we can better understand how the human brain absorbs and processes information... how the brain interprets visual materials."

Berend said it is hoped the program will benefit CIA analysts in interpreting photographs "and other visual information they have to work with."

Children's Hospital and Health Center is a pioneer in work on visual and auditory evoked responses and says the research will benefit its staff greatly in working with children who have learning impairments.

"I want to stress that no children and no drugs are involved," Berend said. "They are following very strict, existing federal guidelines on medical research involving humans... I'm sure HEW (Health, Education and Welfare Department) was consulted."